WEST. Shall we call in the ambassador, my liege[9]?

K. HEN. Not yet, my cousin; we would be resolv'd,
Before we hear him, of some things of weight,
That task our thoughts, concerning us and France.

Enter the Archbishop of CANTERBURY, and Bishop of ELY.

CANT. God, and his angels, guard your sacred throne,
And make you long become it!

K. HEN. Sure, we thank you.
My learned lord, we pray you to proceed:
And justly and religiously unfold,
Why the law Salique, that they have in France,
Or should, or should not, bar us in our claim.
And God forbid, my dear and faithful lord,
That you should fashion, wrest, or bow your reading,
Or nicely charge your understanding SOUL![2]

Thomas Beaufort, Earl of Dorset, who was half-brother to King Henry IV. being one of the sons of John of Gaunt, by Katharine Swynford. Shakspeare is a little too early in giving him the title of Duke of Exeter: for when Harfleur was taken, and he was appointed governour of the town, he was only Earl of Dorset. He was not made Duke of Exeter till the year after the battle of Agincourt, Nov. 14, 1416. MALONE.

Perhaps Shakspeare confounded this character with that of John Holland, Duke of Exeter, who was married to Elizabeth, the king's aunt. He was executed at Plashey in 1400: but with this circumstance our author might have been unacquainted. See Remarks, &c. on the last edition of Shakspeare, [i. e. that of 1778,] p. 239. STEEVENS.

9 Shall we call in, &c.] Here began the old play. POPE.

1 — task —] Keep busied with scruples and laborious disquisitions. JOHNSON.

[a] Or nicely charge your understanding soul—]

Take heed,
lest by nice and subtle sophistry you burthen your
knowing soul,
or *knowingly burthen your soul,* with the guilt of
advancing 9.